

# Summer Staples in our Party Pantries

Panting dogs aren't the only ones who get a bit lazy in the August heat – even the most vivacious hosts and hostesses may feel like it's too hot to entertain. That's just a lot of hot air, say we! It's never too steamy for a good party.

BY JILL BROWN AND ROBERT FENNINGER

**PLEASERS FROM THE FREEZER.**

June's first day of summer marks the day that eight soup bowls get stashed in the freezer. For the rest of the season, they are perfectly chilled and poised to serve up vichyssoise. Next to the bowls

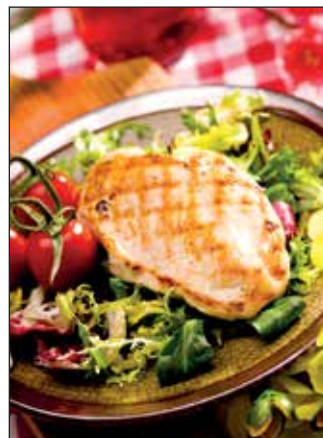


is a frozen container of the classic summer starter, homemade with lots of fresh chives and crème fraîche. Also in our freezers? A French baguette for the casual, pop-up dinner. It's the foundation for bruschetta or a toasted anchovyade spread (brushed with anchovy, a little garlic, parsley and oil). It can accompany a crisp salad or provide the bread needed for gazpacho. You even have the staple for a spontaneous breakfast: just thaw, soak and serve the best French toast ever!



**A PALATE SURPRISE.** Just as we may be tiring of the familiarity of summer's bounty of produce, it's time to serve a wake-up call to your guests' taste buds in pickled veggies. Adding crunch and new texture and flavor, pickled items will liven up the simplest of menus, whether it's grilled, chilled or cocktails. Bob's favorite is French-inspired: pickled sour cherries, which he makes by the jar during that special week or two in June when they are available in Lancaster County. By August, they are a wow!

**BAN THE BIG PLAN.** Make preparations for dinner even without having a planned menu. Start early in the day with a simple protein like steamed shrimp, grilled meat or poached, grilled or roasted chicken. If prepped and in the fridge, dinner can be as simple as a salad with protein, a grilled pizza or simply a composed plate of summer vegetables, a little protein and your favorite drizzle of a dressing or condiment. As the day unfolds, there will be ample time to decide the mood for the evening, but no significant prep work will be needed at the last minute.



**PIZZA DIY.** Speaking of pizza, make your own and accept the accolades. Sure, you can purchase the dough! Just pop it on the grill, pile it deep with what you choose – including greens, salad-style, and a little balsamic drip to give it oomph. It's vegetarian-easy, but you can also please the meat-eater by adding a protein.



**CREATIVE COCKTAILS.** Time to bring out the summer-only stars of the cocktail list. Let's forgo the tried-and-true Gin & Tonic for a real retro redux: an Old-Fashioned, with muddled fresh cherries and cherry juice, plus the best rye. A lighter option is the Pimm's Cup, cool as a cucumber and great with a wedge of fruit. And, for the sparklers in the group, a Bellini (peach nectar and Champagne). Or, take a good-quality white wine, a bounty of fresh fruit, brandy and orange juice – voila, a golden-tinted White Sangria that is also a visual treat.



**SUMMER SIPS.** Chill the wine a bit cooler than the usual cellar temperature – it will quickly come to the right degree in the great outdoors. Sauvignon Blanc, French un-oaked Chardonnay (preferably Chablis), very light reds such as an uncomplicated Burgundy and a light-style Chianti are thoroughly enjoyable during summer's warmest days.



**COFFEE CHILLS AND THRILLS.** Put iced-coffee lovers in a new state of ecstasy by topping it with a super-quality ice cream or good gelato in chocolate or caramel-and-sea-salt.

You too can play it cool and enjoy entertaining in the last – and often hottest – days of summer. The key is to keep your late-summer soirees simple, personal and seasonal!

**JUST ADD WATER.** No time for flowers? Check out the fruit and veggie drawers of your fridge. Use the freshness-appeal factor of lemons, limes and oranges for your centerpiece or patio décor, stacked in tall vessels. For an even more refreshing look, cut them in halves or slices – the prettiest parts of these fruits are on the inside – and submerge them in water. Or, take your potted plants front-and-center: A citrus plant, a jade plant, a gardenia or an orchid can be an eye-catching and aromatic last-minute table focus.



**SASS IN THE GRASS.** Throwing (or attending) a lawn party? Save those stilettos and kitten heels with SoleMates™ – high-heel covers that discreetly increase the surface area on the base of the shoes' heels. Simply attach the temporary fix and you're unsinkable in grass, on decks, and uneven terrain like bricks and decorative concrete. (They're also great for city-walking on uneven surfaces like grates and cobblestones.) Available in clear, black, silver and gold at thesolemates.com or locally at In White, Posh, DSW, The Bridal Boutique (Manheim) and Christmas Tree Shops.



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